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**Subject:** (Rancho LPG - Patch News Article) Tank Farm Near RPV Faces EPA Lawsuit  
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## Tank Farm Near RPV Faces EPA Lawsuit

The Environmental Protection Agency signaled that it would sue Plains LPG Services over alleged violations of the Clean Air Act at its San Pedro tank farm.

By [City News Service](#) | [Email the author](#) | 2:55 pm

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Federal regulators have just sided with San Pedro area activists who claim that a tank farm storing up to 26 million gallons of liquid petroleum gas sits in an earthquake danger zone and is otherwise unsafe.

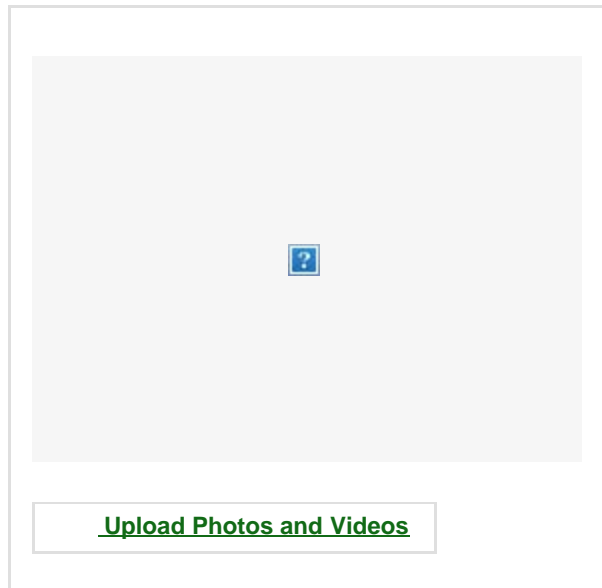
The Environmental Protection Agency late last week told Plains LPG Services it will soon be sued over alleged violations of Clean Air Act that stem from safety risks at the tank farm, which is located at the intersection of Gaffey Street and Westmont Drive in San Pedro near the border of Rancho Palos Verdes.

"This means the beginning of the end for them," said Janet Schaaf-Gunter, leader of the San Pedro Peninsula Homeowners United group. That group has been campaigning for years to shut down the tank farm, which activists contend could trigger an accidental blast with a radius of 3.6 miles.

The tank farm stores 25 million gallons of propane and liquefied butane in two large tanks and multiple smaller ones.

No one could be reached at Plains LPG's Gaffey Street offices Saturday. The company is owned by a Canadian subsidiary of Plains All American Pipeline in Houston, according to its website, and no one was available in Texas on Saturday.

An EPA notice was served on Plains LPG late last week and obtained by City News Service on Saturday. It said the EPA's Superfund Division—which is in charge of major environmental cleanups—inspected the tank farm in 2010 and 2011 and found it does not comply with laws that address pollution caused by possible disasters.



Residents have contended that the company's LPG tanks sit in the midst of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Fault's fracture zone, and are in an area that will liquefy and crack in an earthquake. "The tanks were built 40 years ago to withstand a magnitude 5.5 to 6.0 quake, and we know now that the local fault can generate a 7.3," Schaaf-Gunter told CNS.

The EPA told the company that its mandatory emergency plans did not consider possible seismic stresses on the tanks from the fault. The tanks therefore do not comply with federal laws that require they be built with recognized good engineering practices.

"It is obvious that there is no way they can make that problem safe," Schaaf-Gunter said.

The EPA letter also contends that officials at the tank farm have not worked out plans to coordinate with local firefighters in the event of a problem, have failed to tell its employees whether to fight a fire or evacuate, and has failed to create a way to warn nearby residents of an release of butane gas.

That gas can asphyxiate people, and once diluted by air it can ignite in an explosive, destructive flash.

The company has not set up a plan for firefighting if city water supplies are cut by an earthquake, the EPA charged. And it failed to consider fire dangers in a rail storage yard, where tanker cars are stored and transfer cargo.

And Plains LPG failed to inspect the insides of one large tank for internal safety, the EPA charged.

The federal notice said Plains will be sued in May unless the company can persuade EPA officials that it has taken mitigation steps since the inspections. The plant was built by a company called Petrolane in the 1970s, and then sold to a company called Amerigas.

Although no one could be reached at the company, it has a web page that says tank construction technology has not changed since the 1970s, and says its tanks are not in an earthquake fault zone.

The company also says it passed 14 safety audits in 201, is not in a liquefaction zone, and has a maximum "potential impact zone" of 700 feet.

Schaaf-Gunter said the EPA notice came after years of complaints about the dangers from the plant have been ignored by Los Angeles officials, including Mayor Anthony Villaraigosa and City Attorney Carmen Trutanich.

"We have been dismissed and pretty much sneered at and told that we were inflating things," she said in an interview. "This is important, because I cannot imagine that (the company) can respond in any way to make this plant safe."

A gas leak was reported at the farm in mid-October, shortly after the Rancho Palos Verdes City Council agreed to write letters to adjacent cities and regulatory agencies detailing concerns with the plant, [the Easy Reader reported Nov. 1](#).

—Patch editor Nicole Mooradian contributed to this report.